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MEMORANDUM FOR: 25X1
Acting Director, Office of Assessment and Evaluation

FROM: 25X1
Office of Assessment and Evaluation

SUBJECT: Indication and Warning

1. You asked if there was something we -- the IC Staff and OA&E in particular -- might profitably be doing in the field of I&W. My answer is yes. Let me amplify with a few of my personal observations about the intelligence business.

2. I believe the production community, of which I&W is a part, suffers from over-specialization. That proverbial little old lady in tennis shoes who has spent her entire career on the esoterica of South Pacific ports, really does exist. In some respects she is probably better informed on maritime matters in the target country than indigenous authorities. But developing that intense expertise has cost her an understanding of the broader aspects of political, economic and military matters. She cannot see warning implications because such matters are usually rooted in military, political or economic considerations. In varying degrees, that same problem obtains throughout the production community. Indeed, our various career development and promotion systems stress depth, not breadth.

3. The price for overspecialization is exacted in the timeliness of the intelligence process. If we had to rely on standard intelligence techniques to perceive and correlate indications of a Warsaw Pact attack, the Soviets might well be in Brussels before we were on the wire to NATO. We therefore have created elements variously called I&W centers, alert centers, ops centers, fusion centers, warning staffs, etc., which are intended to handle these faster developing situations. Their purpose is to filter out of the mass of incoming information those bits of information that are "indicative", correlate them with related data, infer conclusions, and warn U.S. decision-makers of developing threats in sufficient time for meaningful counteraction.

4. I&W centers differ from the Production Community at large in that their personnel are specialized along a different plane. They emphasize breadth of knowledge rather than depth. Each analyst covers a vast geographic and subject area, e.g., all political and military affairs in the Middle East and Africa. Of course, one cannot be a very discerning observer of events of

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that scope. As a result, I&W analysts tend to be "underspecialized" just as conventional production analysts are overspecialized. An example of the practical impact is seen in the Mayaguez situation. Its seizure was preceded by ample indicators, but no I&W analyst recognized them. The more specialized analysts who might have recognized the abnormality did not get involved until too late.

5. Of course, a lot of effort goes into equipping the I&W analyst to be a more discriminating observer. Indicator lists, contingency collection sets, abnormal activity thresholds, etc., are all tools intended to enable the I&W analyst to take advantage of the greater expertise of more specialized analysts. These tools have a significant drawback, however. They can be employed only for situations we can anticipate. For example, we can decompose a Soviet mobilization scenario -- a foreseeable possibility -- into discrete events, and then infer indicator lists for each of those events. But how can you draw up an indicator list for an event you don't anticipate? As Richard Betts ably points out, you cannot, by definition, anticipate surprise.

6. You might conceive of the I&W mission therefore as dealing with a spectrum of events ranging from readily apparent contingencies such as set-piece military threats, to matters we simply cannot foresee such as spontaneous border clashes or palace coups. The effectiveness with which I&W centers can prepare for these events varies directly with their relative "expectability". The centers are geared up for early detection of a Warsaw Pact attack, but have to "wing it" on matters which arise abruptly in the Third World.

7. Hence, I&W's prime problem is dealing with the latter category. Our dilemma seems to be that conventional Community analysts seems able to recognize fine grain indicators but are not properly organized to correlate and assemble them into a coherent, timely warning. I&W analysts, on the other hand are spread too thin and, unless aided by indicator lists or other such aids, can only recognize the most obvious of indicators.

8. Is there a solution? Certainly not a total one because advantage will always accrue to the engineer of surprise. But I believe measures are possible to improve warning performance. Our thrust should be to improve communications, foster Community interdependence, and contrive to focus all available information and talent on a given problem as it develops.

9. One specific prescription might be to create a widespread analyst-to-analyst communication system, perhaps incorporating a "bulletin board" concept. For example, an analyst who sees something -- anything -- which he suspects may have warning significance, would simply forward a capsule summary of his concerns via a communication terminal to an electronic bulletin board. Other analysts, similarly equipped with communication terminals, would be able to read the bulletin board, respond directly, amplify, or take other appropriate actions. The system would be inexpensive, yet have the capability to surface isolated anomalies and focus Community attention on them.

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10. Naturally, this would have to be accompanied by a different organizational approach to I&W -- a "holistic" approach, to borrow a term from medicine. It would stand in marked contrast to those who would develop an impressive new National Alert Center with its own computer support, data bases, dedicated communication nets, etc. My approach would be to create a "Wired Community", to paraphrase the James Martin title, which could network together existing Community elements which might contribute to a warning situation. We would create a specialized task force, physically dispersed but electronically co-located, for each warning situation. That electronic task force would contain all the requisite talent and information for the problem at hand, and serve as a base for follow-on crisis management, should that prove necessary.

11. As to OA&E's role in this matter, I would think we would articulate the concept, demonstrate its potential contribution, foster a consensus for its need, and generally act as Community sponsor.



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